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President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 47

The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/54/311, A/54/355)

Draft resolutions (A/54/L.24/Rev.1, A/54/L.27)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Colombia to introduce draft resolution A/54/L.24/Rev.1.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia has the honour of introducing to the General Assembly draft resolution A/54/L.24/Rev.1, entitled "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development".

I would like to convey our thanks to the Secretary-General and to the various agencies of the United Nations system for the timely provision of a range of detailed reports on the situation in Central America, which identify both achievements and work remaining to be done, particularly since the disasters caused by hurricane Mitch. Our gratitude also goes to the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

The peace being enjoyed today by our Central American brothers is the fruit of an arduous process that had the merit of expressing the feelings and the resolute will of the people and the Governments of our region. For Central Americans, as for all societies and nations, peace is an essential element for breaking down the barriers that limit economic and social development. Now we have the necessary legitimacy to proceed to build new democracies.

Colombia has resolutely supported the quest for peace in Central America ever since the first efforts carried out by the Contadora Group in 1983, the Esquipulas process in 1986 and the 1987 Esquipulas II peace agreement. That is why we are honoured to affirm that, 12 years after the signing of the agreement, the region has responded positively. The time has come to pay tribute to the Governments and peoples of Central America for their determination, courage and tireless resolve to promote the cause of lasting peace, human rights, sustainable development and the rule of law.

This has been a difficult but productive year. A number of democratic electoral processes have taken place in an atmosphere of calm and with full guarantees. This is a positive sign of the strengthening of

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democracies in the region. It is true that Hurricane Mitch — the worst natural disaster that has ever befallen the region — had consequences that imperilled the progress of this process. However, that very same natural phenomenon did have a positive impact on the international community, which reacted in solidarity and provided significant support for the rebuilding and rehabilitation of the countries hardest hit and of the region in general.

The reports of the Secretary-General confirm that the strengthening of regional institutions continues. This is evidenced by the activities of the Central American Integration System and the Central American Economic Integration Bank. In the same vein, the Alliance for Sustainable Development, which sets regional strategy priorities to promote respect for life, peace, democracy, human rights, ethnic diversity, economic integration and sustainable development, has continued to carry out its work efficiently. Furthermore, the Central American Court of Justice has been incorporated into the system of regional institutions. These are undoubtedly the pillars of the process.

We wish to stress the important roles played by the Secretary-General, his special representatives, the organs and programmes of the United Nations, the support groups, donors, financial institutions and the international community. We appeal anew to all these actors to avoid the risk of jeopardizing the results of the struggles, lessons learned and successes of this process. Thus, the following affirmation of the Secretary-General in his report is very relevant:

> "One should not underestimate the difficulties faced by the Central American Governments, particularly in reconciling the imperatives of economic growth, stability and equity. Successfully balancing these needs is at the root of lasting peace." (*A/54/311, para. 57*)

The draft resolution before us is a summary of achievements to date and an account of what remains to be done. We invite all member States to adopt it by consensus as a united response to the peoples and Governments of Central America.

Mr. Orellana Mercado (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, Sir, through you and on behalf of the Central American countries Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama and Honduras to thank the States sponsors of the draft resolution entitled "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development". Their sponsorship attests to the solidarity that they have always extended to our countries. Similarly, we thank the General Assembly for its support, trusting that, as in previous years, the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

We also convey our thanks to the Permanent Representative of Colombia for his very lucid introduction of the draft resolution to the General Assembly.

This year marks the twelfth anniversary of the signing of Esquipulas II and the tenth year since the Central American Governments asked the United Nations to participate in implementing that agreement. Since then, the peoples and Governments of Central America have been assisted in the process of establishing firm and lasting peace by this great Organization, the group of friends of Central America, various countries bilaterally and the Rio Group, of which we are now full members.

Thanks to the support of the United Nations and the international community in general, Central America has made significant progress since the General Assembly first considered this item in 1983. All our countries have more pluralistic political regimes and have made significant progress in building democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, the rule of law and sustainable development.

In order to achieve the objectives of strengthening peace and securing development for the region, we have signed a number of agreements, including Esquipulas II in 1987, the Tegucigalpa Protocol in 1991, the Guácimo Declaration and the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America in 1994 and, most recently, the second Guatemala Declaration on 19 October this year.

Likewise, United Nations support through peacekeeping operations has been critical in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. The United Nations presence, through such operations as the United Nations Observer Group in Central America, the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador and the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, was essential at the most critical times to the region's aspirations to end armed conflict. The conversion of these peacekeeping operations into verification missions and, in

some cases, follow-up units attests to the positive results of the regional and international endeavour to strengthen peace in Central America.

In the area of public security, a constant and priority concern of our Governments, we have expanded civilian power and made efforts to strengthen and accelerate the administration of justice by judicial institutions. These efforts in the area of public security and human rights have been undertaken on a regional basis through presidential and ministerial summits.

In the economic sphere, too, we have made significant progress. We participate in regional economic cooperation agreements and regional summits that give priority to matters relating to the socio-economic situation of Central America, the region's vulnerability to natural disasters, sustainable development and trade integration. These agreements and summits underscore the importance of these issues to the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, the participation of civil society and human rights.

The systematic advances of Central America were threatened by the destruction wrought by hurricane Mitch in October 1998. In the year that has passed since Mitch struck the region, the peoples, civil society and Governments of Central America have devoted great effort to rebuilding and transforming our countries. In this process, we have invariably relied on the support of the international community, which responded immediately and continuously to one of the worst hurricanes of this century.

This solidarity is expressed in the Stockholm Declaration, which proposes, as the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/311) notes in paragraph 20, a plan of action for the future based on "an integrated focus on transparency and governability; consolidation of democracy and good governance to reinforce the process of decentralization with the active participation of civil society; [and] promotion of human rights as a permanent objective, with special attention to gender equality and the rights of children and ethnic groups".

In the words of the President of the Republic of Honduras, Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé, in his address to the General Assembly this year,

> "Central America is preparing to cross the bridge between the millenia with all its republics more integrated with each other than ever before, identifying with each other in the common ideal of keeping ourselves united so that we are stronger, of playing a stellar role in the American continent, of turning the isthmus into a point of strategic convergence for world trade and of writing ourselves into a success story that will serve as an example and touchstone to the world community." (A/54/PV.8, p.3)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Mexico to introduce draft resolution A/54/L.27.

Mr. Albin (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Mexican delegation is honoured to introduce on behalf of the sponsoring countries the draft resolution entitled "United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala", contained in document A/54/L.27. In addition to the countries named in the draft resolution, which are the members of the Group of Friends of the Guatemalan peace process, the following delegations are also sponsors of the draft resolution: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Uruguay.

The preambular part gives us a brief account of the various reports that have been submitted to the Assembly for its consideration. It also stresses the role played by the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) in support of the peace process and the concern of the parties for the continued presence of the Mission in Guatemala.

The operative part welcomes the ninth report of the Mission and the report of the Commission for Historical Clarification and its recommendations. It takes note with satisfaction of the progress made in the implementation of the peace agreements and of the initiatives of the commissions created in the framework of those agreements.

The draft resolution underscores that certain key reforms remain outstanding in the fiscal, military and electoral areas, which highlights the importance of continued compliance with the peace agreements in the year 2000. The Government is encouraged to implement its decision to adopt a new military doctrine and to implement the agreements concerning the Presidential Military Staff.

The text also underscores the fundamental need to achieve the targets for fiscal income that appear in the Agreement on Social and Economic Aspects and the

Agrarian Situation, and it urges the Government to step up its work of promoting human rights, taking into account the recommendations of MINUGUA, to provide all possible assistance in the investigation of the murder of Monsignor Juan Jose Gerardi Conedera and to follow up the recommendations of the Commission for Historical Clarification in order to promote national reconciliation.

I wish to draw the attention of the Secretariat to the need to ensure that the Spanish version be aligned with the original English version.

The draft resolution also welcomes the commitment to the implementation of the peace agreements made by the presidential candidates and their support for the extension of the mandate of MINUGUA, and encourages the parties and all sectors of Guatemalan society to continue efforts to achieve the goals of the peace agreements.

One particularly important point is the invitation extended to the international community and to the United Nations agencies, programmes and funds to continue to develop their technical and financial assistance programmes and projects within the framework of the implementation of the peace agreements. In this context, the draft resolution stresses the continued importance of close cooperation among them.

The text stresses that MINUGUA is a key instrument in the consolidation of peace, promotion and observance of human rights and building confidence in the implementation of the peace agreements. For this reason, it is proposed that the Assembly decide to authorize the renewal of the mandate of the Mission from 1 January until 31 December 2000.

Finally, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to submit, as early as possible, an updated report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, with his assessment and recommendations with regard to the peace process after 31 December 2000, and requests him to keep the General Assembly fully informed of the implementation of the resolution.

Guatemala is approaching the new millennium with a new face, a face whose features are the resolve and conviction of a people seeking peace, the certainty stemming from the establishment of new and better political, economic and social institutions and the well-founded hope in a future of greater prosperity.

Our satisfaction with progress achieved in the peace process is due essentially to the Guatemalan people. It is true that much remains to be done. But we are convinced that the dedication of the Guatemalan Government and Guatemalan society to peace and development provides a guarantee that the goals of the peace agreements will be fully attained.

The General Assembly has before it a fresh opportunity to reaffirm its support for and solidarity with the peace process in Guatemala. The United Nations is entitled to share the satisfaction and the hope embodied in another successful experience in the work of our Organization to promote peace. The sponsoring countries trust that draft resolution A/54/L.27 will command the Assembly's unanimous support.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): My colleague and friend, Angel Edmundo Orellana Mercado, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Honduras to the United Nations, has addressed the general topic of our agenda on behalf of all the Central American countries. I would like to refer on this occasion to the draft resolution regarding the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) contained in document A/54/L.27, introduced by my colleague from Mexico.

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation for the initiative taken by Colombia, Mexico, Norway, Spain, the United States and Venezuela in sponsoring this draft resolution. A great deal has been done by these countries, known collectively as the Friends of the Guatemalan peace process, to assist in both the negotiation and the implementation of the peace agreements in Guatemala. We are particularly gratified at the fundamental objective of this proposal: the continued presence of the United Nations Verification Mission in my country.

I believe that this reflects the sentiments of the majority of Guatemalans and certainly those of my Government. It is significant that throughout the political campaign leading to the first round of general elections, held just 12 days ago, and whose final outcome will be decided in the run-off scheduled for 26 December, each and every one of the political parties, without exception, expressed full support for the implementation of the peace agreements, as well as for the continued presence in Guatemala of the Verification Mission. Indeed, MINUGUA forms an integral part of those Agreements.

MINUGUA became operational at the end of 1994, in response to what had been agreed upon between the Government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) in the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights signed in March of that year. Its mandate was, however, substantially broadened by the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace, signed in December 1996, by which MINUGUA was requested to verify the fulfilment of all the obligations the parties had assumed. The Mission was asked by the signatory parties to become an agent for confidence and dependability in the fulfilment of the agreements referred to in the agreed timetable, which covered the period 1997-2000. MINUGUA's mandate includes verification, the exercise of good offices or facilitation, the provision of advisory services and technical support, and public information functions.

As is only natural with such a comprehensive, complex and delicate mandate, the work of MINUGUA has not been without problems and controversies; but we believe that this work has been conducted in an exemplary manner, to the credit of the United Nations and the benefit of Guatemala. As I said at the beginning, the presence of MINUGUA has been crucial to the satisfactory development of the peace process, which has achieved remarkable advances. The transparent and participatory manner in which the general elections have been held is only one of the signs of the strides made in the consolidation of a pluralistic democracy.

At the same time, and as could be expected, much remains to be done, and this is reflected in the draft resolution before us. Some of the significant obligations that were to be brought into effect in the last three years were not fulfilled, or were only partly fulfilled. The fulfilment of yet other undertakings was foreseen only for the year 2000. As long as the Agreement on the Implementation, Compliance and Verification Timetable for the Peace Agreements is in force, doing without the presence and the good offices of the United Nations would be unthinkable.

Finally, from the perspective of the United Nations, its involvement in Central America in general and, more specifically, in Guatemala, should be seen, on balance, as a resounding success. The Organization has assisted Governments and civil societies in finding avenues to reconciliation in areas marked by conflict, while also helping them resume the path to development in areas marked by stagnation or economic regression. At all times the Organization has acted without any particular agenda, guided only by the fundamental ethical principles to which it is held by the Charter, as well as by the guidance received from the national actors involved in this success story. It is therefore altogether fitting that the Organization should continue to be present until the peace process is fully consolidated.

For all these reasons, I join the sponsors of the draft resolution in requesting all the members of the Assembly to support it.

Ms. Rasi (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia — and the associated countries, Cyprus and Malta — align themselves with this statement.

Let me at the outset express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for providing us with excellent, detailed reports on the situation in Central America and on the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA). In particular, we would like to express our gratitude for their timely distribution. We look forward to the fourth report on the implementation of the Guatemala peace agreements.

The European Union recognizes with great satisfaction that all countries of Central America are under democratic rule today, and that democratization and social development in the region have progressed. Not only is there peace in the whole isthmus, but democracy has also taken root as a generally accepted political system. Indeed, significant progress has been achieved since 1983, when this item was first discussed.

The European Union supports this positive development and encourages the countries in the region to continue on this path. Recent elections have taken place in a transparent and orderly manner. However, to improve electoral participation — a cornerstone of true democracy — determined legislative and administrative measures are in some cases needed to make it easier for everyone to cast a vote.

Last year the Central American region was devastated by hurricane Mitch. The European Union provided humanitarian relief and helped in reconstruction. In the months after the catastrophe, it became clear that those efforts alone were not enough. Change is also needed, and in this respect the European Union has continued its dialogue with the countries affected by this

disaster to make sure that the people of the region continue to reap the benefits of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

The Stockholm conference held in May created a solid foundation for our cooperation in this area. We committed ourselves to sharing the responsibility for achieving the reconstruction and the transformation of the countries concerned. This establishes a long-term partnership guided by the priorities defined by the Central American countries and based on the following goals and principles reiterated in the Stockholm Declaration of 28 May 1999: the reduction of social and ecological vulnerability in the region; the reconstruction and transformation of Central America on the basis of an integrated approach of transparency and good governance; the consolidation of democracy and good governance; the promotion of respect for human rights, gender equality and the rights of children, ethnic groups and minorities; and the intensification of efforts to reduce the external debt burden. The European Union welcomes the establishment in September at Madrid of a follow-up mechanism to the Stockholm Declaration.

The European Union has supported international and regional efforts in the search for a negotiated peace in Central America from the very start, including the endeavours of the Contadora Group, which was set up in 1983, the Esquipulas process, which began in 1986, and the Esquipulas II peace treaty of 1987. The San José dialogue, in which the Central American countries and the European Union have been engaged since 1983, has undoubtedly contributed to the emergence of the Central American initiative for a negotiated settlement. It continues to contribute decisively to the efforts of the Central American countries in making the processes of peace and democracy in the area irreversible, to full respect for human rights and basic freedoms, to promoting the development of the most vulnerable sections of the population and to consolidating regional integration.

Our political support for the countries of Central America has always been complemented by substantial assistance in the humanitarian field, as well as in development and economic cooperation. Throughout the times of war, the European Union was the principal aid donor to Central American refugees, displaced and repatriated persons and demobilized fighters.

Ever since the peace process started, the European Union has worked to strengthen democratic institutions and to promote respect for human rights in the region. We can now note that some progress has taken place with regard to human rights, although there are still many problems, particularly in the functioning of the judicial system. Poverty and violence are the main social problems that need to be addressed in order to achieve not only political peace but also social peace and internal security. The primary responsibility for combating these problems lies with the Central American countries themselves, but they can count on the full support of the European Union in their endeavours, including the bilateral aid programmes of member States.

Nicaragua has a historical opportunity to reconstruct and to transform its country. The European Union, which has responded generously to the appeals from the Nicaraguan Government for support of the reconstruction efforts, would like to see a rapid solution to its institutional problems in order to prevent further negative repercussions. In particular, the European Union wishes to express its deep concern regarding the events that led to the imprisonment of the Comptroller General of Nicaragua. The European Union sincerely hopes that the Government of Nicaragua will respond positively to our deep concern, and thus assure a stronger basis for a continued cooperation highlighting the shared values agreed upon in the meetings of the San José dialogue, such as those of democracy, the rule of law and good governance.

I now turn to the current situation in Guatemala. Almost three years have passed since the peace agreements were signed. The European Union has fully committed itself to supporting the implementation of those agreements. The responsibility for the implementation of the agreements lies with the Guatemalan Government, but we call on the whole international community to continue to support it in its efforts.

The European Union commends the Guatemalan people, its constitutional and political representatives and all sectors of civil society for their efforts to implement the peace agreements and for the progress achieved so far, notably regarding the status of women and repatriation. We welcome the completion last June of the repatriation programme. However, much remains to be done. Despite the result of the referendum last May, it is of the utmost importance that the peace agreements be fully implemented, especially with regard to full respect for human rights, equal opportunities for the indigenous population, reform of the judicial system, fiscal and land reform, and reconciliation based on truth. We are

confident that in all these fields there will be a definitive move towards reform after the conclusion of the electoral process.

The end of the armed conflict and the signing of the peace agreements were brought about by the efforts of various successive Governments in cooperation with social, economic and political organizations. The European Union believes that their implementation requires the joint efforts of all sectors of Guatemalan society for a sustained period to turn the agreed measures and objectives into lasting reality. We thus urge all of them, and particularly the political parties involved in the ongoing electoral process, to continue to commit themselves to the full implementation of the peace agreements.

The European Union has noted with satisfaction the work of the Commission for Historical Clarification. The Union urges the Guatemalan authorities to take all steps necessary to implement the Commission's recommendations to the fullest extent possible as a further new element in the existing peace process, in order to strengthen democratization and to lay the foundations for true reconciliation in Guatemalan society.

The European Union deplores the fact that serious law and order problems continue to imperil citizens' security in Guatemala. We are concerned about unresolved cases of violent crimes, in particular the still unresolved murder of Bishop Gerardi, and human rights violations. The European Union calls upon the competent authorities of Guatemala to renew efforts to ensure a full investigation and to bring those responsible to justice. We believe that strengthening the judicial power will be crucial for ending impunity and guaranteeing the rule of law.

All this being said, the European Union strongly supports the indispensable work and activities of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), whose primary function is to ensure the full implementation of the Peace Agreements in a period of four years, which started in 1997. MINUGUA remains at the centre of international efforts to strengthen confidence in the consolidation of peace in Guatemala. Last year, we welcomed and supported the Mission's restructuring and strengthening. We note with satisfaction that this has enhanced MINUGUA's ability to carry out its complex mandate, which also includes good offices, advisory and support services, and public information tasks.

Let me take this opportunity to commend the members of the Mission for their valuable work. The Mission has entered into the third phase of its mandate, covering further development in the implementation of the outcome of the various commissions and promotion of broad administrative and legislative reform.

As to El Salvador, the European Union recognizes that further advances have been made in the implementation of outstanding elements of the 1992 peace agreements, in particular with regard to the land transfer programme.

In other fields, however, certain obstacles to the implementation of pending issues remain. In this connection, may I just mention the rural settlements programme and the problems faced by relatives of deceased combatants who did not appear in the original 1993 census.

Also, we hope for further progress regarding the respect, protection and promotion of human rights. In this connection, we would like to stress the importance of the impartial and active role of the human rights ombudsman. The European Union, in this regard, takes note of the ninth meeting, in February, of the Central American Council of Ombudsmen and its collective call made to their respective Governments.

Furthermore, the European Union wishes to underline that in the field of public security, and in particular with regard to the national civilian police, efforts to implement necessary reforms must continue. In general, we consider it imperative to sustain the gains of the peace process and consolidate the institutions it created.

The European Union therefore strongly supports efforts by the United Nations to foster the consolidation of the peace-building process in El Salvador. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been entrusted with the necessary follow-up to these matters, in consultation with donor Governments, while the Organization's good-offices functions will continue to be carried out by the United Nations Secretariat in coordination with UNDP.

At the fifteenth San José Ministerial Conference between the countries of the European Union and the member States of the Central American Integration System, which was held in Bonn in May, the European Union reaffirmed its will to continue cooperating with the region in order to help consolidate its full development.

The fifteenth Ministerial Conference welcomed the consolidation of Central America as a region of peace and democracy and recognized the efforts made by the Central American countries to guarantee the security of the population. In this connection, the European Union reiterates its willingness to reinforce its cooperation with respective Central American initiatives, in particular regarding the training of civilian police and the development of better relations between citizens and civilian police through information and dialogue. The European Union also supports closer economic integration in the region.

In recent years, the European Union and Central America have tightened their links and developed a rich network of relations. While reaffirming our support for the activities of the United Nations in the region, we also look forward to an intensified cooperation and dialogue with Central America in the framework of the United Nations, based on shared values and common views on subjects of global importance.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): When we debated this item last year, Central America had only days before lived through one of the worst natural disasters of this century, Hurricane Mitch. Although the devastation it caused still has not been completely overcome, the situation has improved markedly. The hurricane triggered one of the largest international coordinated emergency actions ever. Norway has contributed heavily to this assistance.

An important aspect of the large aid package went beyond merely restoring everything back to normal. The donor countries have, in close cooperation with the stricken countries, endeavoured to introduce mechanisms aimed at improving life for all in Central America in the longer term. Within the assistance programmes we have been, and are still, encouraging good governance and higher transparency in government. We will continue to support further efforts in this regard.

The presidential elections in Guatemala have now gone through their first round. A number of international observers were present, and we understand they were satisfied with the way the elections were conducted. Best of all, the voter turnout was a lot higher than expected. Norway congratulates Guatemala on these achievements, and we all look forward to the second round at Christmas.

Transforming the peace agreements into reality is challenging. In the middle of the year the attempt to reform the Constitution ran aground. We take it that the Guatemalans themselves will consider why this important step forward was not achieved at that time, and we trust that further progress will be made in the long run.

The sombre report of the truth Commission was released early in the year, as scheduled. The details of what went on during 36 years of civil war make for sad reading indeed. The fact that it was published is, however, a triumph for the implementation of the peace process.

Norway has undertaken to support the implementation of the peace agreements in Guatemala to the amount of 100 million Norwegian kroner per year throughout the implementation period, that is, 1996 to 2000. This includes being one of the main contributors to the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), whose presence and participation in the implementation process we consider to be of the greatest importance. Norway stresses the importance of extending MINUGUA's mandate to coincide with the implementation of the peace agreements. We therefore support the extension of the mandate until 31 December 2000.

The people and government of Guatemala are at a crucial stage of the peace process. It is now that the foundation is being laid for a nation with equal rights and opportunities for all, as specified in the peace agreements. We urge the Guatemalans to stand united behind the changes that must be made in order to achieve the ambitious goals of the agreements and to make this a national task, irrespective of political or socio-cultural affiliation.

On behalf of the Norwegian Government, I reiterate Norway's willingness to follow up and continue to support Guatemala in its efforts to implement the peace agreements.

Mr. Acharia (India): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/54/311, outlining progress achieved by the countries of the Central American region in the areas of peace, freedom, democracy and development. India's engagement with these countries is well known, and I am happy to take the floor on this agenda item as a reflection of our abiding solidarity and our commitment to strengthening our relations with them.

India's growing interaction with the countries of the region is manifested in diverse areas. We have always

been a supportive partner in Central America's quest for democratization and development. India participated in the United Nations Observer Missions in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Within the framework of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme, India has attempted to share its technical expertise with the countries of the region in areas of interest to them. It is a matter of some satisfaction that these have included areas of high technology, including information technology. Last year and during the early part of this year, to give but one example, India was privileged to receive 120 nationals of El Salvador for a nine-month training course on software development. We are continuing to expand technical and economic cooperation between India and the countries of the Central American region and are imparting to it an additional regional focus by building on the concept of multiple beneficiaries put forward by the Secretary-General in the context of South-South cooperation.

As a democracy, India shares the satisfaction of the Central American countries at the consolidation of democratic processes in the region. We congratulate our friends on having successfully organized free and transparent elections during the past year in Belize, El Salvador and Panama, in spite of formidable challenges, including the devastation caused by hurricane Mitch. We are happy to conclude from the Secretary-General's report that these advances of democracy have been strengthened in spite of internal social difficulties, "compounded by regional and international criminal networks". (*A/54/311, para. 12*) The Secretary-General has also noted troubling cases of threats to members of the judiciary. In an era of globalization, Central America is not alone in facing these challenges to democratically elected Governments by terrorists and criminals, fomented by external forces. The international community will need to act in concert to ensure effective action against terrorists and criminal elements which, using the international financial system and exploiting the problems of underdevelopment, seek to destabilize democratically elected Governments. Democracy should be allowed to flourish without any outside interference.

Last year my delegation noted that the strenuous effort of a number of years for economic development in the region was grievously retarded by the devastation wrought by hurricane Mitch. We endorsed the call of a noted Nicaraguan economist, Alejandro Martínez Cuenca, for a Marshall Plan-style initiative to rebuild the countries of Central America affected by hurricane Mitch. We therefore note with satisfaction the pledge by the international community to provide $6 billion in disaster relief, reconstruction assistance and debt forgiveness, made at the first meeting of the Consultative Group on Reconstruction and Transformation on 10 and 11 December 1998 in Washington. It is to be commended that, six months later, at the follow-up meeting of the Consultative Group in Stockholm from 25 to 28 May 1999, the international community pledged an additional amount of $9 billion. India also extended symbolic assistance, within its constraints, for immediate relief and rehabilitation to those countries in the aftermath of hurricane Mitch.

It is clear that, after more than 35 years of internecine conflict, the historic Guatemalan peace agreements are bringing to an end the vicious circle of political instability that had retarded economic and social development. All steps should be taken to continue the implementation of the peace agreements. It is a pleasure to note that the economies of the Central American region grew by 4.4 per cent in 1998, as compared with 4.3 per cent in 1997 and 2.1 per cent in 1996. The fact that this growth was possible, despite a decrease in the annual gross national of 2.4 per cent in Honduras and of 1.8 per cent in Nicaragua, owing to economic losses due to hurricane Mitch, is to be applauded. Economic and social development is essential if the faith of people in democracy is to be sustained. As the President of Honduras said, addressing the General Assembly at its current session,

> "We struggle each and every day to make democratic rule able to govern, credible, hope-inspiring and trustworthy in the eyes and hearts of the many who do not always have the patience to wait until the benefits of the system materialize, who despair and grow weary of dreaming dreams that are difficult to attain.
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> "For democracy to survive the times and to justify the high price that we have paid for it, it must respond to the concerns and aspirations of peoples." (*A/54/PV.8, pp. 2-3*)

It is this vision which must guide the international community in supporting fully the efforts of the Central American countries for economic growth and development to ensure a better life for, and the prosperity of, their citizens. The international community has a crucial role to play in supporting these efforts. We therefore support fully the proposals of the Secretary-General that debt relief should not be at the expense of official development assistance and that debt repayment

by the poorest countries should never take precedence over the fulfilment of human needs.

An equitable and supportive international economic environment is essential for the growth and development of all developing countries, especially the Central American countries. Most of these countries, according to the *World Investment Report 1999*, have a high "transnationality" index, varying from about 10 per cent for Guatemala to nearly 21 per cent for Costa Rica. However imperfect the computation of this index, it stresses the overall significance of international production for these economies. We were therefore happy to note in the same report that foreign direct investment inflows in many of these countries have increased during 1998. We have also noted the positive assessment of the United Nations *World Economic and Social Survey* that the Central American countries would generally grow at a higher rate in 1999. We also welcome the continued commitment of Central American Governments to the goal of establishing a free trade area of the Americas by 2005. On the basis of our efforts in our region, in the context of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, we recognize the advantages to be gained and productive energies to be released through the creation of free trade areas.

We note with appreciation the efforts of the Governments of El Salvador and Guatemala, in cooperation with the United Nations, to make major advances in the implementation of the peace accords. We also welcome the activities of United Nations funds and programmes to address, in a collaborative manner and in response to national requests, the developmental needs of Central America.

We share the view of the Secretary-General in paragraph 57 of his report (A/54/311) that at this stage of consolidating peace and democracy, we should not underestimate the difficulties, particularly in reconciling the imperatives of economic growth, stability and equity. Growth with equity, in fact, is a common challenge faced by all developing countries. We are therefore perplexed by the proposal put forward to the lending institutions to effectively link debt relief and official assistance with urgently needed public spending for poverty alleviation and strengthening of public institutions that aspire to guarantee respect for human rights, democratic governance, transparency, participation and the rule of law. All of these are important and must be promoted, but the case for linkage between debt relief and official assistance, on the one hand, with human rights and the rest, on the other, is not convincing. The basic problem is gross inequality in the Central American States, which should be addressed through the alleviation of poverty in the region.

We are convinced that fulfilling basic human needs and improving quality of life are the main objectives of any developmental process. While the international community must assist in realizing the cherished objectives of peace and prosperity in the Central American region, the actual impetus comes from the Central American countries themselves. Their recent successes in charting an even course, despite external vagaries, rekindles great hopes. We believe that the wisdom and sagacity of the Central American countries will result in their ever-growing prosperity. India would be privileged to be a partner in this enterprise.

Mr. Bivero (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Central America, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/94. I share his analysis of the progress made by the Central American countries in the areas of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

In evaluating the current situation, we wish first of all to congratulate the Governments of the countries friendly to the region for their continued efforts, in the aftermath of long and costly conflicts, to build politically, economically and socially renewed societies. Their achievements are worthy of the full support of the international community.

As the Secretary-General indicates, the noteworthy contrast between the past and the present situation is evident in the consolidation of democratic pluralism and in the renewed impetus given to regional integration. Beyond that, it can be seen in the continuing commitment — in spite of all the difficulties involved, including those imposed on the region by sizeable natural disasters, such as hurricane Mitch last year — to overcome the fundamental causes of conflicts, while at the same time launching projects such as the Alliance for Sustainable Development and the Central American Union. Venezuela salutes the vision and leadership of the Central American heads of State, their Governments and civil societies, which throughout recent years have endorsed not only commitments to peace and national reconciliation, but also the aim of constructing a region of full peace, freedom, democracy and development.

Undoubtedly problems remain, as do outstanding issues of greater or lesser import in one or another of the

countries of the region that have experienced conflicts. Venezuela is guided in this matter by the scope of the negotiated peace treaties and wishes to reiterate its appreciation to the United Nations for its critical role of support, follow-up and verification, according to each situation, in areas such as human rights, public security, human settlements, land ownership, social integration and advancement of women, among others, which contribute directly or indirectly to consolidating the firm and lasting peace that the countries of the region, individually and collectively, have aimed to achieve. In this context, the United Nations Development Programme, in the case of El Salvador, and the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala play roles of great importance and deserve the continued support of the international community.

Similarly, Venezuela wishes to reiterate its firm commitment to continue contributing, within its ability, to rehabilitation, rebuilding and development of the countries of the region. Following the devastation caused by hurricane Mitch, we are participating in the process of the Consultative Group on Reconstruction and Transformation in Central America, initiated in Washington in 1998, and, in the framework of the San José Agreement, we are contributing with special facilities for easing terms of financing for development projects that we are carrying out in the countries most affected. We are pleased to remain cooperative partners in the important process of political dialogue and economic cooperation that for years has been taking place between the European Union and Central America, known as the San José dialogue, in the framework of which, without prejudice to the most complete respect for and the special nature and scope of relations between the two regions, we can benefit as a country from more direct contact with the realities and interests of the region and from the efforts of the international community to address them.

In these and other cases, the growing practice of regional and international coordination and consultation allows us to better focus our cooperation and to try to ensure that our bilateral efforts have a common viewpoint, which is implicit in the regional project that the countries of the region are undertaking under the general coordination of the Central American Integration System and which is necessary for consolidating peace.

As the Secretary-General indicates in his report, one must not underestimate the difficulties in the path of countries of the region in "reconciling the imperatives of economic growth, stability and equity". (*A/54/311, para.57*) Venezuela supports a continuing commitment by the international community to peace and development in Central America.

Finally, I would like to announce that we wish to join as a sponsor of draft resolution A/54/L.24/Rev.1, on the situation in Central America, which was introduced to the Assembly by the delegation of Colombia.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for providing us with two excellent and detailed reports, on the situation in Central America and on the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

Japan is pleased that at the meeting of the Consultative Group on Reconstruction and Transformation in Central America held in Stockholm last May, the volume of pledges made by donors, including Japan, well exceeded the amount expected. This is a clear manifestation of the international community's continuing great attention to this region.

Turning our attention to political development in Central America, Japan particularly welcomed the presidential election held in Guatemala on 7 November with a high voter turnout, and we hope that the second round, scheduled for 26 December, will also be conducted in a fair and peaceful manner.

Japan gives its full support to the active participation of the United Nations in Central America, and in particular to the continued presence of MINUGUA in Guatemala. Since its establishment, MINUGUA has made a vital contribution to maintaining the peace process at the forefront of Guatemala's political agenda. In this connection, I wish to express Japan's support for the draft resolution before the Assembly to extend the mandate of MINUGUA to 31 December 2000.

As regards the situation in El Salvador, that country has been pursuing the democratization process on its own since the withdrawal of the major component of the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador (MINUSAL) in April 1996. Japan pays tribute to the Government and the people of El Salvador for having conducted the presidential election in a peaceful manner in March this year This was a manifestation of the progress that has been made in the democratization process in that country.

Peace and democracy cannot be fully consolidated unless they are supported by development efforts. Central America still faces enormous challenges, such as the alleviation of poverty, the promotion of social justice and respect for human rights. My Government is deeply concerned that Central America's efforts to achieve democratization, economic liberalization and poverty eradication have been curtailed in the aftermath of hurricane Mitch, which hit the region a year ago. To support the international relief efforts, Japan extended more than $6.6 million in immediate emergency relief assistance. Japan also dispatched a 205-member disaster relief team to Honduras and a 16-member medical team to Nicaragua. At the Consultative Group meeting in Stockholm, Japan announced that by the end of 1999 it would disburse to the four Central American countries affected by hurricane Mitch $300 million worth of assistance to support their reconstruction efforts. Today I am pleased to announce that my Government has almost fulfilled this pledge.

The Guatemala peace agreements signed in December 1996 completed the peace process of Central America and paved the way for the political stability of the region. In order to achieve economically and socially stable societies, issues such as poverty alleviation and improvement in social welfare have to be resolved in the next millennium. In this connection, I wish to affirm Japan's continued support for the reconstruction efforts of Central American countries. My delegation also sincerely hopes that the international community will continue to support the democratization and development efforts of these countries.

Mr. McLean (United States of America): As a strong supporter of the peace process and as a member of the Group of Friends of Guatemala, the United States supports the draft resolution to extend the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) to 31 December 2000. In compliance with United Nations principles and peacekeeping objectives, MINUGUA has played an integral role in encouraging peace and national harmony in Guatemala in accordance with the 1996 peace accords. It has promoted human rights, strengthened the democratic process and helped give voice to many sectors of Guatemalan society that had none. It continues to promote positive legislative and administrative reforms.

My Government does not see MINUGUA as a permanent Mission or as one whose mandate should be extended repeatedly or indefinitely. However, we are at a crucial juncture in the implementation of the peace accords. Guatemalans have elected a new congress and will complete the process of electing a President on 26 December. With a new Government due to take office in Guatemala in January, we believe it is appropriate to extend MINUGUA. Significant advances in human and worker rights, as well as in the participation of civil society, have been achieved, but the year 2000 will be critical in consolidating the progress. Extending its mandate to the end of 2000 will enable MINUGUA to work with the new Government during its first, crucial year in office, encouraging it to continue the peace process and to implement fully the peace accords. We believe this will help solidify the progress MINUGUA and the Guatemalan people have made thus far, provide needed time to strengthen the institutions necessary to continue the process after MINUGUA leaves the scene and ensure peace and stability in the country in the future.

MINUGUA has been a very successful Mission. It has helped to increase political participation and equality for Guatemalan women and to integrate the country's indigenous population into national life. It worked with human rights groups to create commissions within the Government and the armed forces to monitor human rights abuses and to modernize the judicial system. MINUGUA works with other organizations to maintain centres to provide health care to the poor and to promote educational reform and universal schooling.

Extending MINUGUA's mandate for another year will continue the process of reconciliation and reconstruction that Guatemala and its people so badly need. We encourage the new Government of Guatemala to work closely with MINUGUA to ensure that the peace accords are fully implemented.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the significant progress made in the consolidation of the peace process in Central America. Twelve years after the historic Esquipulas II agreement, the countries of the isthmus are firmly on the road to becoming stable and prosperous societies within the framework of invigorated democratic institutions and restructured economies. The free and open elections recently held in Guatemala, El Salvador and Panama attest eloquently to the high degree of institutional maturity achieved in the region.

There remain, of course, considerable difficulties and challenges ahead that reflect the complex nature of the profound changes under way in these countries. A sustained and determined effort is necessary if the national peace agreements are to be fully implemented,

particularly as concerns the fostering and protection of human rights, equal opportunities and judicial, fiscal and agrarian reform.

The first and most important step is the consolidation of peace and ending the culture of violence. We welcome the "peace encounter" held in Guatemala as well as the work of the Commission for Historical Clarification, which seeks to mobilize public opinion around the issue of the peace accords and the need for national reconciliation. It is necessary to secure full international support for these efforts in order to foster economic and social change. Improving the living conditions of the population is a fundamental pillar of lasting peace and democracy.

The economic vulnerability of the Central American countries has serious consequences for the most underprivileged sectors of society. The devastating impact of last year's hurricane Mitch only made things worse. We applaud the determination of these countries to pool their efforts to deal with the economic and social challenges ahead. In their recent joint declaration, the Presidents of the Central American countries expressed their resolve to undertake coordinated action on such crucial issues as protecting the human rights of migrants, combating drug trafficking and moving forward towards regional economic integration. A positive illustration of this regional spirit of cooperation are the measures undertaken by El Salvador and Honduras and by Belize and Guatemala to settle once and for all their differences on border demarcation.

The recognition of the need for common action also inspired the May 1999 Declaration of Stockholm, whereby the member countries of the Consultative Group on Reconstruction and Transformation underscored their commitment to helping Central America at this critical time. Aware of the need to maintain sustained assistance to the region, the United Nations for its part will continue to monitor, through the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), compliance with the schedule set out for the peace process in Guatemala. At the same time, the United Nations Development Programme will pursue its activities aimed at reducing the ecological and social vulnerability of the region and at helping to consolidate democracy and good governance.

Brazil has played an active part in the efforts to achieve peace and development for Central America. Brazil was active in the Support Group of the Contadora process. Brazil has made police units and liaison officers available to MINUGUA. It is also involved in the joint mission of the Inter-American Defense Board and the Organization of American States presently doing demining work in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

In response to the significant human and material losses resulting from hurricane Mitch, the Brazilian Government contributed to the ensuing humanitarian assistance efforts. Brazil donated 18 tons of medical supplies to the four countries hardest hit and sent a reconnaissance mission to evaluate the infrastructure damage suffered by Honduras and Nicaragua. Furthermore, recognizing that the foreign debt burden represents one of the main impediments to the structural reform necessary to sustained growth and social and institutional stability, the President of Brazil has submitted to Congress a proposal to cancel the sovereign debts of Nicaragua and El Salvador to my country.

The successes already achieved in the Central American peace process are grounds for optimism and confidence. I am convinced that these achievements will motivate the countries of the region, with the help and solidarity of the international community, to persevere in their struggle for lasting peace and sustainable development.

Mr. Duval (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution contained in document A/54/L.27, which would extend the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) for a further 12 months. We take this opportunity to thank all the men and women of MINUGUA for their valuable work in difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances. MINUGUA continues to play a valuable role in support of the Guatemalan peace process and is an important indicator of the international community's willingness to support the desire of the people of Guatemala for a just and sustainable peace.

It is understandable that Canada should wish to further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of MINUGUA and hopes to work with the friends of Guatemala and other interested parties in the coming year. The issues that Canada looks forward to addressing include the maximization of the civilian police component and the streamlining of MINUGUA's administration.

MINUGUA retains characteristics and components that are essentially derived from peacekeeping. It is therefore important, for the sake of continuity and efficiency, that, in addition to the guidance and expertise of the Department of Political Affairs, a reporting

mechanism also be established with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. MINUGUA could then draw upon the considerable expertise of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure that the civilian police maximize their contribution to the peace in Guatemala.

(*spoke in English*)

It is also essential that MINUGUA police be given a clearly defined role to assist in human rights verification. As a police contributor to MINUGUA, Canada wishes to ensure that international police are able to offer useful training in such areas as community-based policing and respect for human rights. MINUGUA police could also provide field training and mentoring to the Guatemala National Police in order to utilize their expertise to best advantage.

Finally, we hope to examine ways in which to improve the administration of MINUGUA in order to ensure that the mission operates in a manner as efficient and cost-effective as possible. In this regard, one suggestion Canada would like to discuss with other member States in the coming year is the establishment of the position of chief administrator, with overall budgetary authority.

MINUGUA plays an essential role in the Guatemalan peace process and is a model for other United Nations political/peace-building missions. I note in the latter regard that the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan and the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti will all soon be transformed from peacekeeping into post-peacekeeping or peace-building operations. Canada's aim is to ensure that MINUGUA sets the most effective and efficient example possible for these and further missions.

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): For years the General Assembly has devoted a day to considering the situation of peace, democracy and development in Central America. The Argentine delegation considers it an unavoidable responsibility and a great honour to speak whenever this item is under consideration, because Central America is closely bound to the history and the future of the people of Argentina.

The Argentine Republic has contributed to the peace process begun in Central America since its inception a decade and a half ago, which was crystallized in the signing of the Esquipulas II agreements of 7 August 1987. Argentina believed it a duty to make every effort to find solutions to the problems of the region and was moved by the distressing internal situation of the Central American people and convinced that these sisterly nations simply needed a framework of peace in which to be able to recover and begin their economic development.

When the conflict was resolved, the recovery was surprising. Democratic practices were promptly restored and societies marked out paths towards reconciliation and national unity. In the space of a few years we have seen how they have learned to channel disagreement through republican mechanisms, in a framework of the rule of law and with respect for the principles of democratic governance, independent justice and public freedoms.

This democratic recovery, this choice of a culture of peace and tolerance, could be taken as an example by many other regions suffering chronic conflicts from which they are not able to easily extricate themselves. Healing wounds requires generations, but Central America has done it in a single generation. It has shown us in a surprising fashion that rapid progress towards coexistence, understanding, development, national reconciliation and international reintegration is possible.

However, the situation in Central America is far from optimal. In 1998 an unprecedented climatic disaster shattered many lives and disrupted the infrastructure of vast areas of the region. In many countries the system of economic production was almost completely dismantled and still has not been fully restored. The tragedy of hurricane Mitch was a heavy blow to the possibility of recovery and development, because it meant that the aid provided had to be diverted, thus preventing resources from being applied to economic investment. This tragedy is compounded by the well-known structural economic problems of developing countries, in particular dependency on commodities whose prices continue to decline, the use of subsidies and para-tariff restrictions on imports of their products into developed markets.

Central America does not only need direct assistance. It also needs its products to have access to the markets of the developed countries. It needs the developed world to take relief measures relating to its external debt, such as those so generously adopted by Canada last year. It needs the countries with resources to participate in the efforts being made by the Central American countries. Argentina is here today, as always, to testify to our commitment to these purposes.

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Sixteen years have elapsed since the General Assembly first included this item on its agenda, and since then we have witnessed deep and very positive changes taking place in the region.

Political, social and economic transformation now present us with a Central America free from armed conflict, a Central America with strengthened democratic institutions and a Central America in which peace, the protection of human rights and regional integration have been established on a solid footing. This dynamic transformation of the region has been possible essentially because of the efforts of the peoples and the Governments of the region, although we must also recognize and value the significant role played by the peacekeeping operations and verification and observer missions that the United Nations has been deploying there since 1989.

As a country that contributes troops to peacekeeping operations missions, Uruguay has unswervingly supported the activities of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), whose basic function is to ensure full implementation of the peace agreements over a four-year period, until the end of the year 2000. We have been particularly pleased to witness the process of cooperation and integration that our Central American brothers, with a lofty and profound democratic spirit, have articulated in the Nicaragua Declaration of 1997 and in the Esquipulas agreements. It is because of these efforts that peace and stability have finally prevailed throughout Central America.

Mr. Stanislaus (Grenada), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Finally, we wish to reiterate what Uruguay has repeatedly advocated: there can be no peace without development. For this reason, cooperation on the part of the international community is more necessary now than ever in order to ensure further consolidation of the peace process. In this regard, Uruguay reaffirms its far-reaching solidarity with our Central American brothers, with the aim of ensuring that we all work together for a peaceful, democratic, integrated and prosperous Latin America. The support and encouragement of the Government and the people of my country can always be counted on.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Permanent Representative of Finland has already spoken in this debate on behalf of the European Union. My country fully associates itself with her statement. Nevertheless, I wish to make some additional remarks, as Spain is a member of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General for the Central American countries.

Spain continues to support the implementation of the December 1996 Guatemala peace agreements. Progress has been made since their negotiation thanks to the commitment and the efforts of the various sectors of Guatemalan society and of its political representatives. In spite of the disappointing results of the popular referendum last May, Spain trusts that that commitment will continue during the electoral process now under way in Guatemala, as well as afterwards, in the renewal of the democratic institutions.

Since the signing of the agreements, the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) has been an essential element in the implementation process and an important signal of the interest with which the international community is following this process. Spain is proud to have participated very actively in MINUGUA from the outset, and, after Guatemala itself, Spain is the country that has the greatest number of nationals in the Mission. We trust that the General Assembly will renew the mandate until the end of the year 2000.

A year ago hurricane Mitch was wreaking havoc on a significant part of the Central American isthmus and leaving in its wake a human tragedy of enormous magnitude. The international community reacted swiftly. The meeting that the Consultative Group held in Stockholm last May laid the basis for cooperation in reconstruction, while at the same time it established some common objectives and principles, as expressed in the Stockholm Declaration of 28 May. Just as we urged the Central American countries to put into practice the commitments undertaken, we also trust that the donor countries will be able promptly to honour the contributions pledged.

Precisely in order to ensure that the process thus begun does not lose its initial momentum, a follow-up mechanism to the Stockholm Declaration was established in Madrid on 13 September, and Spain is pleased at present to act as its secretariat *pro tempore*.

Spain has supported and joined in the efforts that the European Union has made from the very outset to cooperate with the affected countries through humanitarian assistance and assistance for reconstruction.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members that action on draft resolutions A/54/L.24/Rev.1 and A/54/L.27 will be taken at a later date, to allow time for a review of the programme budget implications of the two draft resolutions.

Agenda item 21

University for Peace

Report of the Secretary-General (A/54/312)

Draft resolution (A/54/L.30)

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Costa Rica to introduce draft resolution A/54/L.30.

Ms. Vargas (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am honoured to address the General Assembly under agenda item 21, entitled "University for Peace", on behalf of the Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, as well as the Dominican Republic.

The University for Peace was created by the United Nations General Assembly on 5 December 1980, and its primary purpose is the quest for peace through education. It is guided by the tenets of the United Nations Charter and promotes the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its own charter.

Peace, education, communication, consultation and human rights are the focuses of the University's programmes. Factors that have a direct or indirect impact on peace, such as the environment, natural resources, sustainable development, quality of life, technology and international relations, are studied in terms of their real impact on peace and not as isolated topics. Since its establishment by the General Assembly in resolution 35/55 on 4 December 1980, the University has worked with dedication to develop the programmes and activities stemming from its mandate, which has become increasingly essential, given the state of violence and armed conflict prevailing in many parts of the world, even at the threshold of the new millennium.

Thus, as an international centre specialized in peace its activities in post-university education, research, dissemination and worldwide promotion of knowledge may be regarded as a response to this obvious and urgent necessity. There is no question that this is a challenge to the University. We are grateful for the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/54/312. The report gives an account of the various activities carried out by the University for Peace, and the difficulties that it has encountered in implementing them. The report furthermore indicates the means used by the Secretary-General, the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of the University to bolster cooperation between the United Nations and the University for Peace.

Overriding importance has been given to three closely interrelated issues: financial support, political support and revitalization of the University. We support and appreciate these measures and the focus on the future.

For 19 years now the University has been implementing Master's degree programmes in the fields of international relations, ecology and communication for peace. It has also carried out extensive work in the areas of peaceful settlement of conflicts, consensus-building, social and labour consultation and the international training of indigenous leaders.

In Central America, the University has cooperated in the peacemaking process through projects of education for peace, culture of peace, human rights, conflict resolution techniques and promotion of democracy.

To date, 33 countries have signed its International Agreement, and throughout its history the institution has received financial support from the Governments of Spain, Italy, Denmark, Canada, Sweden, the Netherlands and the Governments of the Central American republics and Uruguay. It has also received contributions from international agencies, non-governmental organizations and interested individuals.

During the first half of 1997 the World Centre for Research and Information on Peace was set up in Montevideo, Uruguay. The development of that Centre was possible thanks to the generous support extended by the Government of the President of the Republic of Uruguay, Mr. Julio María Sanguinetti.

In the light of the recent commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the

Child — whose interest in the area of peace relates in particular to the protection of children in armed conflict — we wish to express the hope that the University for Peace will include this priority in its programmes to promote peace in the world. We hope that this noble purpose will be achieved in the new millennium.

I would now like to take this opportunity to introduce draft resolution A/54/L.30 on behalf of the States of Central America, including Panama, as well as the Dominican Republic. As with previous draft resolutions on this item, we hope that it will be adopted by consensus by the General Assembly. I would also like to thank the President for agreeing to our request.

I am now pleased to introduce the draft resolution on behalf of the following sponsors: Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, the Comoros, the Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Djibouti, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Georgia, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Norway, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Senegal, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Solomon Islands, Spain, the Sudan, Suriname, Tajikistan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The draft resolution recounts in its preambular paragraphs the history of the University for Peace, from its establishment by the General Assembly in resolutions 34/111 of 14 December 1979 and 35/55 of 4 December 1980, to resolution 50/41 of 8 December 1995, which requested the Secretary-General to consider ways to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the University for Peace.

The sixth preambular paragraph recalls the recent adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. Pursuant to this mandate, the University has collaborated with UNESCO in promoting the culture of peace.

The draft resolution also notes the establishment, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme, of a Trust Fund for Peace by Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar consisting of voluntary contributions to provide the University with the necessary means to fulfil its mandate.

The text notes with appreciation that by agreement with the University for Peace, the Government of Uruguay in 1997 established a World Centre for Research and Information on Peace as regional sub-headquarters of the University for Peace for South America.

It also notes with appreciation the actions taken by the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO and with the support of the Government of Costa Rica, to revitalize the University for Peace.

The subsequent preambular paragraphs highlight the varied and important activities carried out by the University through its various programmes during the period from 1997 to 1999. The text takes note of the programme to create a culture of peace in Central America and the Caribbean within the context of the efforts being made by the United Nations and UNESCO for the development and promotion of a culture of peace. The text also recognizes the preparations for a symposium in celebration of the International Year of Older Persons, 1999, to emphasize the valuable contribution that older persons can make to the promotion of peace, solidarity, tolerance and the culture of peace.

The draft resolution refers to the importance of promoting education for peace that fosters respect for the values inherent in peace and universal coexistence among persons, including respect for life, the dignity and integrity of human beings and friendship and solidarity among peoples without any distinction as to nationality, race, sex, religion or culture.

In the operative paragraph of resolution 52/15 of 20 November 1997, the General Assembly declared the year 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace. In conformity with that paragraph, we kindly ask that an operative paragraph be included in the draft resolution before the Assembly today to say,

> "*Invites* Member States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the peoples of the world to celebrate One Day in Peace, 1 January 2000".

In its operative part, the draft resolution takes note with appreciation of the Secretary-General's report, contained in document A/54/312, on measures to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the University for Peace.

The following paragraph requests the Secretary-General to consider using the services of the University for Peace in his conflict-resolution and peace-building efforts, given the valuable contribution the University can make in this regard.

Paragraphs 3 and 4 invite Member States, intergovernmental bodies, non-governmental organizations and interested individuals to contribute directly to the Trust Fund for Peace or to the budget of the University. Member States are also invited to accede to the international Agreement for the Establishment of the University for Peace, thereby demonstrating their support for an educational institution devoted to the promotion of universal peace.

The last paragraph decides to include in the provisional agenda of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session the item entitled "University for Peace".

When we speak of peace we are speaking about love; we are speaking about tolerance; we are speaking about united families; and we are speaking about brotherly peoples. The University for Peace helps us build this dream.

In closing, we would like to express our hope that this draft resolution will be welcomed by the General Assembly and that, like the resolutions of previous years, it will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Suh (Republic of Korea): At the outset, allow me to extend my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the University for Peace (A/54/312). I would like to express my gratitude to Mrs. Nury Vargas of Costa Rica for introducing the draft resolution before us. My thanks go also to Mr. Maurice Strong, the new Rector and the President of the Council of the University for his briefing last Monday.

As is well known, the University for Peace was established by a General Assembly resolution in 1980 to provide higher education for peace to students from various countries. This University is unique, as it is a global institute established by the United Nations and the only university to give a degree in peace studies. Its central goal is to promote a spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence among peoples. In view of the fact that next year is designated as the "International Year for the Culture of Peace", the role of the University and the need to implement its mandate are stronger than ever before.

Despite the unique character of the University for Peace and its noble aspirations, it has undergone over the past few years a reduction in its activities, mainly due to financial constraints. However, we note with satisfaction that the University is now on the road to revitalization, an accomplishment that is linked to the follow-up of the reform of the United Nations.

My delegation would like to take this occasion to welcome the newly appointed President, Mr. Maurice Strong, and other members of the Council. We are pleased to note that the revitalization process has been back on track since last March. In this regard, we would like to commend the numerous initiatives and efforts of the President and other members of the Council. It is our sincere hope that the Council meeting scheduled for the beginning of next week will be a milestone in launching the new University for Peace.

Let me make a few comments and suggestions with regard to the University's current programmes and activities. We must envision a new way of ensuring peace, since peace cannot be equated simply with the absence of violence but requires the elimination of the root causes of conflict. Although the current programmes of the University have fulfilled the global mission entrusted to it by the United Nations, we are pleased to note that prospective programmes have gone a step further to address the theme of peace realistically and comprehensively.

Moreover, we concur with the promising initiative to appoint people of exceptional experience and standing in the field of peace negotiations as Fellows of the University.

My delegation would like to add that the University would surely be more successful if it set up virtual academic networks with other universities and institutes through the exchange of students, faculties and credits. Furthermore, these networks could be further reinforced through interactive teleconferencing and Internet programming.

In the light of extensive measures under way to firmly set the University for Peace on a strong platform, adequate and proportionate financial support from various sources is required. Hence, it would be worthwhile to come up with incentives to channel private contributions to the University.

The Government of the Republic of Korea contributed funding and equipment to the University upon its establishment. My Government remains committed to assisting the University for the future of its work. In this vein, my Government has co-sponsored the draft resolution on "University for Peace", and we hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina is honoured to co-sponsor the draft resolution on the University for Peace. All the endeavours of recent years to end conflicts among peoples have demonstrated the need to build a culture of peace, based on humankind's profoundest convictions, to replace the culture of violence and war.

In working towards this objective, the University for Peace has become particularly significant as an excellent environment for educating people in a spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

In this context, the institution has become particularly relevant given the reality of societies affected by longstanding conflicts which have opted for war as a way of life. In this regard the University has a significant contribution to make to the international community.

Educating for peace involves a sustained, long-term process that must be able to rely on adequate resources. In this regard Argentina encourages Member States, intergovernmental agencies and non-governmental organizations to contribute directly to the Trust Fund for Peace or to the budget of the University.

If a greater number of States of the international community become voluntarily involved in this project, the University for Peace will have the means that it needs to disseminate the values that it fosters and will be able to design more ambitious programmes, which will enable it to play a greater role in the peace-building processes under way in various regions of the world.

Argentina is committed to supporting any international initiative to educate for peace, and we support the draft introduced by Costa Rica because we believe that education for peace is the first step towards instilling this concept as a universal value.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Let me express at the outset our appreciation of the comprehensive, candid and focused report of the Secretary-General on the University for Peace (A/54/312). We have noted with satisfaction the actions taken by the Secretary-General to establish due oversight and accountability in the areas of administration, personnel and finance of the University.

We commend the steps taken by the Secretary-General towards revitalization of this noble institution. We remain indebted to the Government of Costa Rica for its continued support for the University. The advice and support extended by Mr. Federico Mayor, the previous Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in strengthening the institution deserves special acknowledgment.

We believe that with the assumption of the presidency of the Council of the University by Mr. Maurice Strong, there is naturally higher optimism and greater confidence in the institution.

Bangladesh has co-sponsored draft resolutions on the University for Peace ever since its inception in 1980. We have done so this year for the draft resolution in document A/54/L.30, and urge the Assembly to adopt it by consensus. Here, my delegation would like to accord its full support to the proposal made by the representative of Costa Rica for the addition of a new operative paragraph relating to the observance of One Day in Peace, on 1 January 2000. We believe that this proposal deserves our support, and we hope that it will be possible to obtain the support of the Assembly as a whole.

We recognize the role played by the University and share the conviction that the institution can make an effective contribution to the cause of peace and well-being for humanity. The conflagrations around the world remind us of the necessity of research on and education in peace. The complexity of emerging conflicts demands greater understanding of the factors determining the course of events in such situations.

In this context, we welcome the change envisaged in the programme of the University. We have noted with satisfaction that future programmes will be substantially expanded to embrace a wider range of relevant themes. The inclusion of such thematic areas as the universal

culture of peace, the environment, economic development, democracy and the role of the media is a timely move in the right direction.

We would like to see the University for Peace assume a truly universal character and a really global vocation. It should be able to attract people from all over the world and assemble the broadest spectrum of people working for peace. It should be able to demonstrate its relevance to individuals — men, women and children — and to societies and nations in various parts of the world.

We believe that the United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted by the General Assembly last September, has the potential to provide useful guidance and substantive input with regard to the elaboration of the future programme and course contents of the University for Peace. Each of the nine sections of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace may constitute an area of study with reference to real and potential conflict situations. Such studies would provide extremely useful input for decision-making and action aimed at preventing conflicts. We would also like to see this document on a culture of peace included in the existing Master's degree course in human rights and education for peace.

We are confident that the committed leadership of Mr. Maurice Strong will make a special contribution to the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. In this regard, I would like to mention that, pursuant to the commitment made at the Hague Appeal for Peace Conference last May by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, peace and human rights education has been introduced at primary and secondary school levels in Bangladesh. It is our earnest hope that the programmes of the University for Peace will foster and bring together such initiatives all over the world.

It is disconcerting to see that the financial situation of the University remains precarious. It is disappointing to note that resource constraints have substantially curtailed the activities of an institution established with lofty ideas. The purpose for which the institution was established by this Assembly about two decades ago remains valid. Let us give to the University that we have established the means to achieve the objectives we have set for it.

No one disputes the dictum that prevention is better than cure. We have calculated the costs of war too many times. History has repeated itself, and we have failed to learn from experience. The human cost, which is immeasurable, remains a heavy burden on our collective conscience. The expediency of support for preventive diplomacy and peace-building efforts cannot therefore be overemphasized. In the final analysis, the casualty in every conflict is humanity. In the ultimate analysis, too, the cause is human. It should therefore not be too difficult for humans to live in peace and let others live in peace. For that we need the learning of peace, teaching of peace and preaching of peace — in short, a culture of peace. Given the means, the University for Peace can greatly contribute to achieving this objective. There is no doubt that we would all like to see the University more actively involved in serving the cause of peace, the supreme objective enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It is equally true that it is our will and our attention that can make the difference.

Mr. Belfort (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the delegation of Haiti to voice the full support of the Republic of Haiti for draft resolution A/54/L.30, on strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the University for Peace, which has its headquarters in Costa Rica. I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the people and the Government of Haiti, to the memory of all the women and men of goodwill who have fallen in the service of peace and of the United Nations. As the Assembly knows, the University for Peace was established 19 years ago in order to provide humankind with an institution of international scope dedicated to teaching, promotion and dissemination of the ideas of peace, peaceful coexistence and cooperation among peoples.

At a time when a kind of narrow realism still dominates the spirit and the current system of international relations, we cannot fail to pay tribute to and admire the work being carried out by the officials of that institution of higher education, which, though at an early stage of its development, is nonetheless essential. As Pope John Paul II rightly said several years ago, peace is another name for development. These two concepts have, in fact, become interconnected. Furthermore, the Secretary-General highlighted that fact very clearly in his report in document A/54/312 on the University for Peace. Paragraph 18, subparagraph (g) of that report states,

> "The linkages between economic development and the preservation of peace are clearly of fundamental importance ... The preservation of peace in the next century will depend on achieving more equitable

patterns of economic development ... [and] reducing poverty ... and the grounds for conflict .

With this wise comment, the Secretary-General touched upon a critical element of the dynamics of inter-State relations, for so many of the conflicts that shake our world and inflict grief on peoples result from a lack of solidarity and a slow but sure process of exclusion.

The delegation of Haiti has taken good note of the report of the Secretary-General in document A/54/312, and we warmly thank him for it. Although it deals only with those means envisaged to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the University for Peace, an in-depth and dispassionate reading of the report will enable us to understand the real issues of the next millennium that could be included within the notion of human security. This new notion will no doubt be at the heart of the problems of global society in the twenty-first century, for on a planet that is seeing the increasing establishment of a new system for the creation of wealth based on new technologies, the sight of a constantly widening gap between the beneficiaries of the process of globalization and those whom Frantz Fanon called the damned of the earth will be more and more intolerable. In a world still governed by a narrow realism, sometimes sterile but always destructive, it is clear that those who envisage a better future for humanity will have much to do to definitively set in motion the dynamic of change that is so necessary for sustainable human development.

It is no doubt from this perspective that the philosophy underlying the programme and action of the University for Peace is established. That institution has already been in existence for 19 years, during which it has acquired a certain maturity and has demonstrated the validity of its work, which in turn has prompted the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to take the necessary measures to revitalize the University for Peace and to expand its programmes and means of action to allow it to carry out its fundamental mission, that of reducing obstacles and threats to peace and progress throughout the world — not by having recourse to the all too well-known Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, but by appealing to all that is most noble in human beings: the sense of solidarity, the desire to commune with one's fellow human beings and with nature, in a word, everything that gives humankind its moral and spiritual value. In his *Antimémoires*, André Malraux suggests that the twenty-first century either will be religious or will not be, religion here meaning the relationship we have with the earth, with human beings and with the cosmos. The Haitian delegation therefore takes this opportunity to congratulate the officials of the University for Peace for having thought of including in their curriculum the ethical and spiritual values that can serve as guidelines for the establishment of a genuine culture of peace.

In UNESCO's Constitution it is stated that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". At the threshold of the twenty-first century, it is the General Assembly that must make this University a major bulwark in the defence of peace. This will perhaps allow us to shed the parochialism, the destructive and sterile egoisms that continue to cast a pall over mankind and allow the spread of the viruses of war and poverty. This is a University for democracy, for development and for peace.

In the face of the threats that continue to harm human security, the Haitian delegation renews its support for the University for Peace and its officials and, further, urges the General Assembly to firmly support draft resolution A/54/L.30, designed to strengthen that institution and thus allow it to carry out its fundamental mission.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/54/L.30, as orally revised.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/54/L.30, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/54/L.30, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 54/29).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 21?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.